Hello! If you've made it this far, it's because the search for the historical truth about Jesus of Nazareth has intrigued you as much as it has us. This support material was created to deepen your journey, offering a practical guide with the main sources and academic references mentioned in our video.

Our goal was to explore the existence of Jesus through a purely historical lens, seeking evidence outside of biblical texts. The overwhelming majority of historians and academics of the period agree that Jesus was a real historical figure. Below, you will find the foundations of this conclusion.

1. The Context of the 1st Century CE:

The Roman Empire was a recording machine. Censuses, executions, popular movements, and unrest in the provinces were documented. Judea, a turbulent region, was the scene of various messianic movements and prophets. The execution of a figure like Jesus by order of a Roman governor would, in theory, be an event worthy of record. And, as we saw, it was.

2. Roman Sources:

- **Tacitus (c. 56 – c. 120 CE) – "Annals" (Book XV, Chapter 44):**
    - Considered one of the greatest historians of Ancient Rome.
    - Around 116 CE, Tacitus describes the Great Fire of Rome (64 CE) and the blame Nero attributed to Christians. He mentions that the name "Christian" derived from "Christ," who had been executed by Pontius Pilate during the reign of Tiberius.
    - **Significance:** Tacitus was not a Christian and showed contempt for the movement. His mention is a historical record of an event and a figure, with no intention of promoting Christianity.
    - **Reference:** Tacitus, *Annals*, Book XV, Chapter 44.
- **Pliny the Younger (c. 61 – c. 113 CE) – Letters (Book X, Letter 96):**
    - Roman governor of the province of Bithynia (modern-day Turkey).
    - Around 112 CE, Pliny writes to Emperor Trajan seeking guidance on how to deal with Christians. He describes their practices: meeting before dawn, singing hymns to Christ "as to a god," and taking oaths of moral conduct.
    - **Significance:** Pliny's letter is an administrative document that attests to the existence of organized Christian communities, centered on Christ as a real and revered figure, as early as the beginning of the 2nd century.
    - **Reference:** Pliny the Younger, *Letters*, Book X, Letter 96.

3. Jewish Sources:

- **Flavius Josephus (c. 37 – c. 100 CE) – "Jewish Antiquities":**
    - Jewish historian who wrote for a Roman audience.

    - **Passage about James (Book XX, Chapter 9, Section 1):** Mentions the execution of "James, the brother of Jesus, who was called Christ." This is widely accepted as authentic and powerful incidental evidence.
    - **Testimonium Flavianum (Book XVIII, Chapter 3, Section 3):** This passage is longer and praises Jesus. Most scholars agree that Josephus's original text was interpolated (modified) by Christian copyists. However, specialized research (such as John Meier's) strongly suggests that there was an original core by Josephus about Jesus, even with later additions.
    - **Significance:** Josephus, a non-Christian Jew, provides mentions of Jesus that, even with the complexities of the Testimonium, point to his historical existence.
    - **Reference:** Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities*, Book XVIII, Chapter 3, Section 3; Book XX, Chapter 9, Section 1.
- **The Babylonian Talmud (compilation from the 2nd century CE onwards):**
    - Compilation of rabbinic Jewish discussions.
    - Contains references to a character named "Yeshu" (the Aramaic form of Jesus). The passages are often hostile.
    - **Significance:** The hostility is, paradoxically, evidence. Jewish communities that opposed Christianity chose to record and criticize its founder, rather than ignore him, which presupposes his existence.
    - **Reference:** For an in-depth analysis, consult: Schäfer, Peter. *Jesus in the Talmud*. Princeton University Press, 2007.

4. Contemporary Academic Research:

The overwhelming majority of historians studying the period, regardless of their personal beliefs, conclude that Jesus of Nazareth was a real historical figure.

- **Bart D. Ehrman:** Professor of New Testament Studies at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, agnostic.
    - **Key work:** *Did Jesus Exist? The Historical Argument for Jesus of Nazareth*. HarperOne, 2012. Ehrman dedicates a significant part of his work to refuting the idea that Jesus never existed, based on historical evidence.
- **John P. Meier:** Jesuit priest and Professor of New Testament at the University of Notre Dame.
    - **Key work:** *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus* (5 volumes). Doubleday, 1991-2016. One of the most exhaustive and respected analyses of the historical Jesus.
- **Maurice Casey:** Professor of New Testament Studies at the University of Nottingham.
    - **Key work:** *Jesus of Nazareth: An Independent Historian's Account of His Life and Teaching*. T&T Clark, 2010.

Historical Conclusion:

The convergence of these independent sources – Roman, Jewish, and the critical analysis of modern historians – leads to the conclusion that Jesus of Nazareth was a 1st-century Galilean Jewish preacher who gathered followers, came into conflict with religious and political authorities, and was executed by crucifixion under Pontius Pilate, likely between 26 and 36 CE.

The academic debate does not center on the existence of Jesus, but rather on the interpretation of his life, his teachings, and the events that followed his death.

We hope this material inspires you to continue exploring the fascinating history of the ancient world!